

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CONAKR 01607 111306Z

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1198

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

UNCLAS CONAKRY 1607

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OTRA GV

SUBJECT: VISIT OF IMAM FROM MECCA FOR END OF RAMADAN CELEBRATIONS

1. PRESIDENT SEKOU TOURE GETTING MAXIMUM POLITICAL MILEAGE FROM VISIT TO GUINEA FOR END OF RAMADAN PRAYERS OF HIS EMINENCE MOHAMED ABDALLAH MOHAMED AL SBAIL, IMAM OF ALHARAM MOSQUE IN MECCA. GOG CLAIMS THAT IMAM'S VISIT, HIS FIRST OUTSIDE OF SAUDI ARABIA, IS AN HONOR FOR GUINEA.

2. AFTER LEADING PRAYERS IN FRONT OF CONAKRY'S PEOPLE'S PALACE (TRAFFIC CAME TO A COMPLETE STANDSTILL), IMAM, ACCOMPANIED BY PRESIDENT TOURE AND LARGE MINISTERIAL DELEGATION, FLEW TO LABE, KANKAN, N'ZEREKORE, AND FARANAH FOLLOWED BY HELICOPTER TRIP TO MORE REMOTE TOWNS. ON PRESIDENT'S ORDERS BORDERS WERE OPENED TO FAITHFUL FROM PERIPHERAL NATIONS (INCLUDING SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST). IN N'ZEREKKE, FOR INSTANCE, THE ROAD FROM THE AIRPORT TO TOWN, SOME 13 KMS, WAS LINED WITH FAITHFUL. GROUP ISLAMIC MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS (SYRIA, PAKISTAN, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, AND PLO) ACCOMPANIED IMAM AND PRESIDENT ON FIRST PART OF ITINERARY. IMAM WHO ARRIVED FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, WILL REPORTEDLY DEPART ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 13.

3. PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR, WHO ACCOMPANIED, GREATLY IMPRESSED WITH ENTHUSIASM AND DEVOTION OF FAITHFUL IN THIS PREDOMINANTLY MOSLEM COUNTRY. PRESIDENT TOURE, WHO IN PAST WAS NOT REGARDED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 CONAKR 01607 111306Z

AS PARTICULARLY RELIGIOUS, HAS RECENTLY BEEN INCREASINGLY

EMPHASIZING DEEPLY RELIGIOUS BASIS OF GUINEAN SOCIETY (WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION ALSO TO SMALL CHRISTIAN MINORITY) AND CLAIMS STRONG RELIGIOUS CONTENT FOR HIS PARTICULAR BRAND OF SOCIALISM.

4. IMAM'S PRAYERS AND SPEECHES WERE DEVOID OF POLITICAL OR IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT, WHICH IS HIGHLY UNUSUAL HERE. PRESIDENT TOURE WAS SEEN CONSTANTLY AT HIS SIDE.
MACDONALD

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